

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

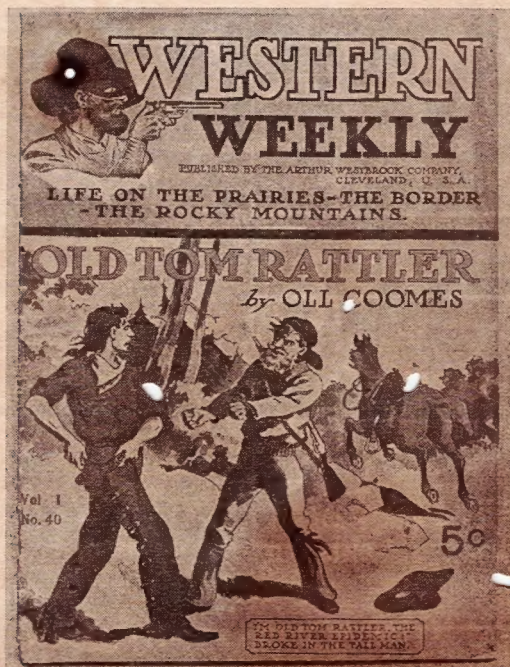
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Gilbert Patten: The Man and the Magic

By Frank C. Acker



DIME NOVEL SKETCHES NO. 82

WESTERN WEEKLY

A continuation of the American Indian Weekly. Began July 13, 1911 with No. 33 and lasted until April 25, 1912 with the issuance of No. 74. It was a colored covered, 32 page, 8x10 publication similar to the standard weekly format. The stories were mainly reprints of Beadles Half Dime Libraries.

Gilbert Patten: The Man and the Magic

By Frank C. Acker

Crucible: America

Cordelia Patten, pious and God-fearing, knew on that October day in 1866 that the time to deliver herself of child was close at hand. But she could have had no premonition of the vital spark for good burning within that child. Nor did her strapping husband, William, when at last he held the infant, his first son.

Certainly they would have dismissed as madness any dream that this tiny baby, to be known to them and the other folks of Corinna, Maine, as Willie, would one day be known to millions as Burt L. Standish or Gilbert Patten. Yet this was to be. The name Standish was to inspire and strengthen three decades of American boys and help them to face unafraid the complex challenges of the twentieth century.

How and why did this come to pass? What were the forces acting upon our nation in the latter 1800's that made it ready to welcome a man of Gilbert Patten's particular character and talents? The story is America: her heart, her ideals, her responses to the stresses of Civil War aftermath and the ensuing vigorous growth.

Gil Patten was born into the century that the poet W. H. Auden termed the Age of Progress. Looking back at our country's role in that century, we might well view it as the Age of Action. For action was clearly the hallmark of Americans from the 1860's on into the new century.

With the end of the Civil War came massive reconstruction and a relentless, powerful thrust westward. There seemed to be no horizon, no limits to what the American man could do. An almost religious faith in the superiority of our democracy fired the land. We became superconfident, cocky, brash. Alexis de Toqueville, French Statesman and writer, took a first-hand look at our country and concluded that "for the last 50 years no pains have been spared to convince the inhabitants of the United States that they constitute the only religious, enlightened, and free people."

The most famous American toast of the century bore him out:

"To the United States: bounded on the north by the Aurora Borealis, on the south by the precession of the equinox, on the east by Primeval Chaos, and on the west by the day of judgment."

And so Willie the infant boy, on October 25, 1866, joined a restless breed of man . . . man aggressively on the move, his towns soon to be booming, his ships carrying produce across the world, his railways and factories multiplying.

Dime Novel: Malaeska to Merriwell

These men were attuned to action. They and their sons hungered for vivid tales of action. And it had now become possible to print and distribute paper-covered books at a profit. Inevitably the dime novel arrived. It quickly became big business, satisfying vicariously the widely shared longing for adventure and conflict, but in a context of the highest moral standards. In

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The 25th day of this month is the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Gilbert Patten. This issue is dedicated to his memory as will be the November issue.

fact, "Malaeska, the Indian Wife of the White Hunter," is generally accepted as the first dime novel. Yet it had appeared originally as a prize story in *The Ladies Companion* in 1839, twenty-one years before its publication in "dime novel" format. Its author, Mrs. Ann S. Stephens, was an eminent novelist and editor.

Malaeska introduced the long line of "yellowbacks" which, along with competing paperbacks, won rapid acclaim. Beadle and Adams, publishers of Malaeska, tried for years thereafter to eliminate the use of the derisive term "yellowback" but without avail. They need not have worried. Sales boomed. Men and boys alike were spellbound by the tales of Indians, pioneers and adventurers. The names of the heroes tell their own story: Wild Bill, Buffalo Bill, Texas Jack, Kit Carson, Daniel Boone. Avid readers thrilled to these colorful figures as early as the 1870's and 80's.

But for Frank Merriwell, the All-American, All-Time athlete, it was still too soon. The earliest professional baseball team did not appear until 1869 . . the world series not till 1903. The first football match under the Harvard rules was played in 1873, with professional football dating from 1895. College was still for the few in Gil Patten's youth. Collegiate sports reigned in a relatively limited world. Baseball, however, was winning popularity throughout the cities and towns of the nation, and Patten learned to love the game and to know it well. In time he managed a professional team in Camden, Maine. His great regard for the sport was to be reflected throughout the Merriwell series.

With the final decade of the 1800's, our robust country was coming of age. Dime novels, like their readers, had gradually changed. In fact, as early as the 1880's, shortly after the introduction of the detective, gamin, and boot-black stories, the deterioration of the dime novel had set in. The "blood and thunder" tales were making heavy way. Erastus Beadle died in 1894 and soon after, the famous Beadles ceased publication. Dime novel readers now sought something new, something that would depict more truly the spirit and the vision of the new America. These readers awaited a special marriage of talents . . . the publisher perceptive enough to sense the need, and the man fitted to meet that need.

That man, born six years after the appearance of the first dime novel, was now fully prepared, professionally and personally.

Growth: Professional

Professionally, by 1896, Patten had come a long way from that first six-dollar sale of two short stories to Beadle and Adams. Then he was still a student at Corinna Union Academy. Now he was a proven veteran. His sales included westerns and detective tales to Beadle and Adams, short stories under various pen names to other publishers, and a play which in time brought in about \$2600. His stories to Munro's "Golden Hours" earned him as much as \$250 each. His work for Street and Smith had won him their fullest respect, a fact of vital importance, as we shall presently see.

Thus a full decade of hard work had firmly established Gil Patten in the dime novel field and enabled him to buy a summer home in Camden, where his parents came to live. His recognition was well merited. His stories had sold well in virtually every major dime novel field. He could be depended upon for regular, high output. In short, his productive years to age thirty were really more years of preparation. They had sharpened his writing skills

and to this important degree had equipped him to undertake what he was later to call the "longest serial-story ever written."

Growth: Personal

But professional readiness was not the primary qualification Patten was to require in the fateful year, 1896. Indeed other able writers were on hand and would gladly have undertaken a new dime novel series of promise.

There was, however, one qualification even more vital than professional experience. This was purely personal and possibly not shared by any of Gil's fellow dime novelists. It was simply this: Patten was peculiarly and uniquely fitted, by personal heritage and growth, to create the touch of magic essential to that long serial . . . the magic that was to conceive and develop the character of Frank Merriwell.

To appreciate this fully we must go back to Gil's earliest days, to the persons and the circumstances that shaped him through boyhood and young manhood. His earliest memories were of parental oppression and restrictions, well intended but bound to be frustrating to any normal, healthy boy. Almost daily his parents lectured him on the shamefulness of fighting. If his school-mates call him "sissy," he must turn the other cheek. Fight? Never! Church three times on Sunday. Constant charges of laziness as he took refuge more and more in reading and day dreaming, and neglected studies that held no appeal for him.

Inevitably he became a shrinking, sensitive lad with an inferiority complex. His difficulties were compounded in later boyhood by too-rapid physical growth. Confusion and uncertainty were heightened each new year as father and mother urged him towards separate paths. From the one: learn to be a carpenter and do an honest day's work with the hands God gave you. From the other: study to be a preacher and live a God-fearing life useful to your fellow men.

Small wonder that Willie was lazy and disinterested in school, studying only what appealed to him. At an early age he turned to strictly forbidden dime novels as a safety valve to vent the pressures from parents, school and his more aggressive playmate. He read the tales far into the night, reveling in the vicarious thrills of independence and high adventure. Ironically, he also absorbed from these forbidden novels a clean code of moral behaviour and a high standard of personal ethics.

Patten's dime novel reading and borrowing had other results. It earned him a nickname, Rolling Thunder, which he resented. Perhaps even more he resented being called Willie, yearning to be called the more manly Bill like his father. Finally, goaded beyond endurance, he deliberately took on his tormentors one by one in a series of fights he provoked. His determined campaign at last won him the respect of the other boys and the use of the nickname Bill . . . and perhaps even the grudging respect of his parents. But these complicated years left their mark. Gil never lost the natural sympathy they had given him for the under dog, nor his contempt for braggarts and bullies.

In his article, "Merriwells Kept Me Young and Healthy" published September 1940, Patten says that at age 15 he stood six feet and weighed 115 pounds, "with legs as thin as toothpicks." He continues, "A prominent Adam's Apple accentuated the narrow base of my neck. Between bony forward-rounded shoulders, my flat chest appeared hollowed. I was subject to headaches, and frequent colds kept me sneezing and barking throughout much of our long Maine winters

He went on: "I've never forgotten what a young country doctor said to me one day after I'd almost coughed my head off in his presence. He said: 'You're going to die young. My brother had a neck like yours and he was

always catching colds. He died of consumption when he was twenty-two.' . . . a cheerful thing for a doctor to tell, gratis and brutally to a boy of 15 who was already all too conscious and ashamed of the fact that he was a physical weakling in the eyes of his schoolmates and playfellows . . . it frightened me."

Out of these early years of conflict and pressure it was natural that Gil Patten, in later creating Frank Merriwell, should wish to make him the fellow he had longed to be . . . a superb athlete, clean mind in a sound and vigorous body, full and warm compassion for his fellow man, of whatever walk of life, creed or color. As few persons could, Patten understood in maturity the emotions and needs of American youth. He sensed their yearning for an ideal and knew instinctively how to develop that ideal into an image that the American boy would admire and wish to emulate.

Thus, through thirty years of complex personal growth and a decade of strenuous writing, Patten-the-man and Patten-the-writer had merged by 1896 into a creative entity, uniquely fitted to bring to life the legend of Frank Merriwell.

Fulfillment

Happily, Patten's publishers, Street & Smith, saw the potential at this time for a new and different series of stories for boys. They asked him if he would like to try writing it, providing Patten with broad guide lines in Mr. O. G. Smith's letter of December 16, 1895. The idea appealed to Patten and he agreed to write the first story for consideration by the publishers.

Within a brief period Patten made several basic decisions which were to determine the character and moral tone of the entire series. First, he created the name of his hero with the directness of genius, a name that would symbolize and keep constantly before his readers the characteristics of the protagonist, Frank Merriwell. He chose "Frank" for his open and frank character, "Merri" for his happy disposition and bent to optimism, "well" for health and abounding vitality, which was to translate to superb coordination and skills in all sports.

Secondly, he imposed upon his hero one great weakness, the impulse to gamble, together with tolerance of the weaknesses of others. Thus he made him the more human . . . and more likable.

Third, he surrounded him with friends from different backgrounds, races and colors. Through them he was able to teach by example, without preaching, and to help erase prejudice and intolerance from growing minds.

Fourth, he decided to feature all kinds of athletic sports, with primary emphasis on baseball. By featuring this kind of material he would have even broader opportunity, again through example rather than preaching, to put across his ideal of a clean mind in a clean, healthy body.

Finally—and most importantly—he decided to give depiction of character priority over plot, insofar as he could without destroying suspense and action-interest. From this decision stemmed the main ingredient of the magic in the Merriwell series. For it was Patten's ability to make his readers visualize his characters as real persons and to care about them and become involved in their lives . . . it was this ability that breathed sustained life into the series and gave Frank Merriwell his lasting place in the legends of America. The Tip Top applause columns provide indisputable evidence of Patten's effectiveness in characterization and reader involvement.

These decisions made (and developed as the years went on), Patten quickly completed the necessary research and then in four days of writing turned out his first Merriwell story: "Frank Merriwell, or First Days at Fardale." It was promptly accepted by the delighted publishers and its author bound, by contract at sixty dollars weekly, to the production of a 20,000 word Merriwell

tale each week. And so, with the newsstand appearance of the first Merriwell an indestructible American hero was born.

The rest is publishing history. Instant success. A sustained weekly series of 850 Tip Tops, virtually all but the tag end by Patten, followed by 136 New Tip Tops by other writers. These 986 tales, covering about twenty years of publication, comprise the Merriwell saga. In addition, however, over two dozen Merriwell tales appeared (1915-16) in Tip Top Semi-Monthly and in Wide Awake Magazine. Then in the years 1927-30 the Merriwells appeared sporadically in such Street & Smith magazines as Sport Story, Fame and Fortune, and Top Notch.

In all, Patten himself said that he wrote more than 900 original Merriwell stories. Later, in 1941, he wrote his final Merriwell story, "Mr. Frank Merriwell," which was published only in hard cover form. Unfortunately, it sold poorly. Publication delays and advertising and budget decisions of the publisher led Patten to place major blame on him. Whatever the reasons for the failure, and they were doubtless complex, Gil decided never to write another Merriwell story. However, as we shall see, this decision was not to bar efforts for radiocasts of his Merriwell tales.

The original novels are believed to have sold over 125 million copies. Reprints bring the estimated sales figures to 500 million. But no one can estimate with authority the enormous readership through resale, barter and exchange . . . a practice that many a former reader will recall fondly.

It is noteworthy that the many Merriwell reprints included about 30 titles in hard cover, a reminder of Patten's considerable success in that field. The Rockspur series, Big League series, College Life series, Rex Kingdon series, Clif Sterling series, Ben Stone series, The Deadwood Trail, Bill Bruce of Harvard . . . these and other hard cover titles brought Patten considerable personal satisfaction and important income.

But in the long view these "prestige" publications are secondary. His personal memorial rests on none of these. Rather, his fame and his name will live on just so long as the Merriwell legend survives. In Merriwell and through Merriwell Gil Patten found fulfillment.

Retrospect

Gilbert Patten died in 1945 at age 78. Looking back . . . as we know he did . . . he had cause for satisfaction. On the personal side, despite two unsuitable marriages, he and his third wife, Carol, enjoyed twenty years of congenial, warm companionship, terminated only by her untimely death. Gil was particularly close in later years to his son, Barr, and to Barr's wife and their daughter, Gilberta. His last days in their California home were enriched by the bonds of family love and security.

On the professional side, the satisfaction of a productive and useful life-work was his. He had seen his Frank Merriwell become American legend, appearing in dime novels, books, magazines, syndicated columns, comic strips and radio. He had come to appreciate the significance of the nation-wide influence he exerted over our youth, a beneficent influence spanning three decades and ranging far beyond the relatively few persons he could have reached as the preacher his mother wished him to be.

Further, Patten sustained to the end his unswerving efforts to bring Merriwell to more of his fellow Americans. At age 77, for example, in a letter to me he said:

"I'm now working to launch a Frank Merriwell radio program of half-hour weekly broadcasts, having the original Frank and Bart Hodge as the leading protagonists . . . Of course, Frank has the lead. The scripts cover action in Honolulu at the time of the Pearl Harbor disaster,

proceeding thereafter through the South Seas to Australia, Mexico and eventually back to the USA at El Paso. Frank is a newspaper correspondent and spy-and-saboteur hunter. Some characters of the original stories appear, such as Chester Arlington, Inzo, and Elsie, and likewise sons of other characters. I once wrote the scripts for 39 Frank Merriwell broadcasts given over NBC's Red Network . . . Twenty-six scripts are already written."

These are the words of a remarkable man, mentally alert, vigorously imaginative, still breathing deeply of life. Withal we know that he was a modest man, ever appreciative of the zest, the variety and the fullness of life granted him.

And because he was this kind of man, once he comprehended the impact of his Merriwell tales on youth, he accepted and kept faith with what he regarded as a personal responsibility: his unique opportunity to inspire in growing America a sense of tolerance, clean living and fair play. Whatever his retrospective surveys in latter years, Gil Patten must surely have felt that the game was a good one and his part in it highly privileged.

Horizon Unlimited

Yet we know, too, that Patten in his late years often pondered the mystery of life and felt that in 50 years after his death, perhaps 25, he and the Merriwells would be quite forgotten.

Today's evidence is to the contrary. Red Smith devotes a full syndicated column (Providence Journal, Sept. 18, 1966) to Frank Merriwell and Harry Rattleton in a tongue-in-cheek comparison to Brian Dowling, Yale sophomore athlete of 1966. In the New York Times Book Review (Sept. 11, 1966) Rex Lardner reviews "The Legend Of Hobey Baker," famous Princeton athlete and 1913 football captain, and describes Baker as "a bit more than human, a taciturn Frank Merriwell in a Charles Dana Gibson collar." Examples of current reference to the Merriwell legend abound. We see no signs of Merry's relegation to the limbo.

Joe Williams, sports editor of the World-Telegram, made the point well in his column, written upon Patten's death, when he said: "One of the best things that keeps our youth what it is today—yes, and our country—is the fact that Frank Merriwell is as indestructible as the north wind, as enduring as the sun." Williams reminds us in his column that he has known Merriwell many years: as Babe Ruth, an urchin off the streets of Baltimore who grew up in baseball to make more money than the President of the U. S.; as Gene Tunney, who came off the harsh downtown docks of New York to win the heavyweight championship, make a million dollars, and marry the girl of his dreams; as Gene Sarazen, son of an immigrant Italian laborer who lived to walk arm in arm with the man who gave up his throne for the "woman I love."

If finally on some grim day Merry must come to bat in the ninth against hopeless odds that the legend will be struck out, he has strong reserves to draw upon. The fine Merriwell collections already treasured in some of our college libraries will help to preserve the legend and to insure its reaching the hearts of the yet unborn. And I like to think that in years to come even more will be done by imaginative members of the Merriwell legion.

Perhaps, for example, some "Merry" admirers in a position to do so may one day elect to establish an endowment at Yale, which might be known as the Gilbert Patten Scholarship Fund. The income from this fund could serve each year to help a student selected on the basis of character, leadership, athletic ability and need. I doubt that Gil's dreams would have dared to foresee this, any more than his mother could have dreamed of the remarkable future awaiting her newborn baby, Willie. But Gil would be pleased. Frank

Merriwell would live on at Yale, guiding and helping a succession of fine lads through the years. The Merriwell horizon would be truly without limit.

Farewell

And now it is fitting, on this centenary of Gilbert Patten's birth, to close with a tribute of affection and gratitude. Some of us were fortunate enough to have known Gil. We respected, admired and loved him. Those of us are legion who were privileged as boys to read and to "live" his inspiring Merriwell tales. He brought us, faithfully each week, a unique and exciting happiness never to be duplicated in later years. He held before us ideals we would perhaps never attain, but he made us wish to keep trying.

And so down through those unforgettable years Gilbert Patten sang this Merry song. He reached out to the many and he blessed us with the touch of magic.

In England for about eight centuries, the end of one reign and the beginning of another have been announced by the seemingly heartless proclamation of the herald: "The King is dead. Long live the King." In the same way the inspiration of legend must be nurtured and passed on, generation to generation.

Frank Merriwell—legend, inspiration, ideal—we salute you. Gilbert Patten—creator of legend and idealist—we thank you and commend you to tomorrow.

The End

WANTED

Tip Top #27. Sport Stories: 1927 April 22, Nov. 8, 1928—Mar. 8, July 8; Tip Top Semi-Monthly: 1915—Aug. 25, Oct. 25.

Will purchase or trade from following:

Tip Top #33, 35, 39. Top Notch: 1929—Oct. 15; Nov. 1, 15, Dec. 1, 1930—Feb. 1
Sport Stories: 1928—Sept. 8, 22.

Other scarce items—dime novels, magazines, etc. Inquire.

OTHER WANTS

Chapman—Radio Boys to the Rescue. West—Motor Rangers Touring For A Trophy. Baker—Boy Ranchers in Terror Canyon. Whitney—The Saber-Tusk Walrus. Young—any Ned, Bob and Jerry titles. (Not Motor Boys). Lawton—Ocean Wireless Boys and the Lost Liner. Stratemeyer—Football Boys of Lakeport.

FOR SALE

Tip Tops, Boys Books, Magazines. Reasonable. Lists upon request.

Harry K. Hudson

3300 San Bernardino St.

Clearwater, Fla. 33515

The Influence of Charles Dickens on Gilbert Patten

By Gerald J. McIntosh

I believe that Charles Dickens was the favorite author of Gilbert Patten and that "David Copperfield" was the book he loved more than any other. I can cite several good reasons for this. I will explain to the Round-Up readers why this is my belief.

There are several instances recorded in the Merriwell stories in Tip Top Weekly which could conceivably make one think that Patten considered Charles Dickens an exceptional writer and that he loved reading David Copperfield. I have an idea that he read it more than once. It became evident not a great many months after Tip Top was launched there was a style and pattern followed by Patten, at least to this writer, that resembled to some extent that pursued by Dickens. I did not read the early Tip Tops when they were first published. I was about twenty months old almost to a day when No. 1 appeared, having been born Aug. 17, 1894, before the first copy was issued and sent forth April 18, 1896. Nor did I read it until many years later, my first copy to revel in delight over being No. 585, June 29, 1907, just six weeks short of my 13th Birthday. (How I remember that front cover scene of the ball being "scooped up" on the baseball diamond). But I was a country boy, couldn't get to town every week, and had to read it rather intermittently. Later on I had to read it more or less irregularly, as the small towns my Dad had to locate in in following his job didn't have Tip Top for sale at the rather slimly supplied news stand at the corner drug store, so I couldn't find it very often. My nickel allowance a week I used mostly in those periods of time to buy the "Saturday Blade" and "Chicago Ledger." They came together and were always available, no matter where we moved to, how small the berg, etc., for there was always a boy in the place with a haversack of a thing that brought them to your door and sold them on the streets.

Sometimes the boy would also have the Saturday Evening Post, which Dad liked so I got to read it also. How I did eat up those continued stories for boys in the Chicago Ledger, and how I did enjoy the ten day old news in the Blade, and the lurid drawings accompanying a lot of the items, drawn by Andre Bowles & C. W. Fryer. I still have some of them clipped from both papers. One of them a drawing by Bowles of the robbery of a bank in Wapanucka, Oklahoma, the small town in which I lived at the time, showing the outlaws, four of them, escaping on a railroad handcar, vintage of 1910. Some of the poems and jokes in the Ledger I kept and have a few till this day. THEM WAS THE DAYS!

But to get back to Charles Dickens. Even though I had to forego the pleasure of reading the vast majority of the Tip Tops at the time they were first printed, especially the early numbers, and almost up to No. 600, it is a fact that many years later, I acquired all of them and read the entire 980 copies, though only in recent years did I accomplish all this. But there was one advantage in the way I read them. I was in my maturity and had a better understanding of them. Thereby, I had gained a knowledge that was helpful to me in regarding the stories of the Merriwells and comparing them with others. In the meantime while I was in school and at other leisure times I had read some of Dickens' works, tho not all of them, but liked all those I did read, especially David Copperfield. I think almost anyone would love the story and urge one to read it while time is left. It is good entertaining reading.

It was in Tip Top No. 160 I first "caught" something about Charles Dickens and his works. Frank Merriwell, Jack Diamond, Bruce Browning and Harry Rattleton were vacationing in London, England. Frank and Jack got into a discussion about Dickens'

writings, Diamond being more on the "intellectual" side than the other two chums, and Merry asked him if he had read any Dickens books, and Jack hadn't. Frank told him he thought Dickens the greatest novelist who ever lived. "Think so?" said Jack and Merry replied "Yes." And said he didn't think anyone who had read David Copperfield would think otherwise. Diamond wasn't much impressed but Merry urged him to read "Oliver Twist" first, then David Copperfield. Frank explains the book contains some of the most powerful descriptive passages ever penned. He mentioned some of the characters, Nancy Sikes, Bill Sikes, Fagin, etc., and again urged Jack to read it and all the other books Dickens wrote. Frank suggested they visit some of the haunts of Dickens, "The Old Curiosity Shop," and so on, which they did.

David Copperfield came into quite a bit of attention in Chapter one of Tip Top No. 380, and later pages of the story. Frank Merriwell, touring in the West with a baseball team made up of his old chums visited the ghost town of Lost Packet. The sole inhabitant of the town was an old miser-hermit miner, old Tige Miller who lived in one of the old dilapidated cabins, whose one possession outside of the necessary essentials to keep body and soul alive was a copy of this book, which could be considered his one "luxury." Burt L. Standish described the book as "soiled, stained and torn, one cover gone and a few pages missing, and strange it was that of all the pages in the book, two plainly showed they had been most read; and there were peculiar splotches on these pages, as if raindrops had fallen there—or were they tears? On one page was the letter from Little Em'ly to Ham, received after she had eloped with Steerforth, and the other page told of the death of David's child-wife, Dora. Other pages of the book may have caused the old hermit to laugh and chuckle, but these had struck straight to his heart, as if they somehow touched the very fountain of his young life that was lost

and gone forever." The old hermit had a secret which doesn't really belong here, but I will relate a line or two of it. Elsie Bellwood was in Frank's party along with Inza Burrage and her father. When Elsie appeared the old hermit stared at her like one in a trance. The end of the story discloses that the old hermit in his youth had loved "Bernice" (?), the mother of Elsie when she was a young woman, but had lost her to Capt. Justin Bellwood, the seaman. He carried a picture of her in a locket and instantly saw the resemblance, and Elsie identified it as that of her mother. The old hermit's name was really Ernest Kennard. After the tragedy of his life he went West and had never married. He loses his life at story's end, by being drowned. He had saved up some "dust" in his search for the precious metal, and before the water got him he showed Elsie where it was hidden and willed it to her.

Dick Merriwell was also a devotee to Dickens. In Tip Top No. 558, he was asked by "Pet" Cunningham if he ever read Dickens much. Dick replied that he had had that pleasure to some extent. Cunningham advised him to read "Great Expectations."

In Tip Top No. 568, "Dick Merriwell's Regret; or, The Friend He Never Knew," that number which created such a sensation when published, and which most Tip Toppers regard as the greatest Merriwell story of all, David Copperfield was discussed so much and talked about that it could practically be regarded as a part of the theme of the story. Ellis Preston, I should say the somewhat questionable "star" of this particular tale, had good qualities, but his "cowardice" in this story seems to overshadow his virtues. Dick Merriwell does not realize this until too late and this is a source of great "regret" to him when all is said and done. David Copperfield, the book, is dwelt upon so much here I find it difficult to relate all I would like to. It would be too long to comment all I wish I might. Among other things to be said for good about Ellis Preston was that

he kept and read some good books. And among his books the one he seemed to have read the most was David Copperfield. As Burt L. Standish put it in the story: "Among the few books of fiction that Preston had on his shelves, the one that seemed the most worn was David Copperfield, one that seemed to have been perused many times, the author being Charles Dickens, that master of heart-reading. A glance at this book told of the hours Preston had spent in company with David Copperfield, the waif; Little Em'ly, the betrayed; Uriah Heep, the slimy; Wilkins Micawber, the slothful; Ham, the faithful; Pora, the child-wife; Agnes, the true and trusting; Barkis, who was "willin'" and handsome Steerforth, the splendid, jovial friend and betrayer. In places the leaves of the book were worn almost to tatters. These worn leaves were indications of the repeated times that some one had sat enthralled by the magic of the printed words. Here was the story of Little Em'ly's flight with Steerforth. Here was the coming of Peggotty, afoot and alone, sore-hearted and sad, starting out on his search to find "her." There were splotches on the pages that told of Pora. Tears had fallen there. But the pages most worn were those describing the terrible storm and the shipwreck that took the lives of Ham and Steerforth." One way to judge a person's character is by the books he reads and loves. Were it true that Ellis Preston had read and re-read this one book until the tattered pages told the story of its many perusals, there could be but one estimation of Preston's character. The ordinary novel-reader might get through the book once and enjoy it—might possibly repeat the performance. The reader with a heart would peruse it more than twice, and the one with a throbbing, sympathetic soul would never cease perusing it. (These last four lines are also quotes of Burt L. Standish following the above lengthy remarks on David Copperfield and the reading of it by Preston). A lot more could be said, but space doesn't per-

mit. At Preston's funeral, death had been caused by a cold and pneumonia contracted after he had been thrown into the river by some sophomore students to whom he wouldn't "knuckle," his mother, who had been sent for came, and was greeted and helped out in her sad hour by Dick Merriwell and some of his chums. When the funeral was over and affairs were sort of cleared up, Preston's mother upon departing, said that Ellis loved the book, David Copperfield, and asked Dick had he ever read it. Dick replied he had done so several times. The mother then asked him if he would like to have the copy. Dick told her yes, and she gave him the book and Dick said he would keep it for all time and read it again. Earlier in the story Dick and Brad Buckhart were discussing David Copperfield and Brad said he had also read it, saying he didn't do much novel-reading but that this book was "the best thing he had ever went up against."

"Dick Merriwell's Regret," No. 568 of the Tip Top Weekly, was certainly one of the best stories ever issued in the nickel and dime novel field, and surely a "classic" far and away above the average found in like publications back in those good old days. However, I would like to get off the trail a bit and comment on the alleged fact that Patten is said to have been somewhat guilty of plagiarism for once when he wrote this story. The facts are told in about two pages of Levi Cutler's "Gilbert Patten and His Frank Merriwell Saga," which came from the University of Maine Press in their University of Maine Studies, published at Orono, Maine, in 1934. Cutler says with probable accuracy that the story Patten wrote as Dick Merriwell's Regret in Tip Top No. 568, March 2, 1907, follows very closely that of one titled "Wellington" by Charles Macomb Flandreau, which appeared in the author's "Harvard Episodes." I don't know when this was, but wish I had the story that I might read it myself. Mr. Cutler says the stories run parallel and "unmistakably" are very similar to one another.

Well, "plagiarism" or not, the story certainly was an excellent one. Have read it more than once and I thoroughly enjoyed it each time. I recall that Patten mentioned plagiarism once in his autobiography, "Frank Merriwell's Father," but can't seem to remember if it was in connection with the story in Dick Merriwell's Regret, but I don't think so.

Well, after viewing the above "evidence" I doubt that any of the old readers and members of the Round-Up who read the Tip Top Weekly back in those long past days will disagree with me in believing that Charles Dickens was Patten's favorite author and David Copperfield his most loved book. It seems convincing.

Another writer who must have stood high in the estimation of Patten was Samuel L. Clemens, "Mark Twain." This writer has read "The Adventures Of Tom Sawyer" and "Huckleberry Finn" as well as other books of this gifted and famous penman, and have found all of them to be wonderful writings. Patten must have had in mind the doings of Tom, Huck and others of the imaginations of Mark Twain when he wrote the jokes, pranks and quips of Frank and Dick Merriwell and their numerous chums that capered through the pages of Tip Top Weekly.

At one point in his career Frank Merriwell found himself in the thick of a revolution in "Tampano," an imaginary country of Central America. He was a virtual prisoner in the President's palace. Looking around the room he found several books in Spanish and English, and to his surprise there was a copy of Twain's "Innocents Abroad." And though in great peril, Frank proceeds to start reading the book. Patten-Standish tells us of Frank's enjoyment and merriment as he read and perused the copy and related how Frank chuckled and laughed in merriment when reading of the travelers and the sunset and sunrise in that far away hotel in Switzerland, of how he kept on reading in great interest, deaf to the music and the cheering and the rattle of soldiery

that came in to him through the palace window where he was a prisoner and in great danger in that mythical city of "Estrella" down in Tampano. The text and the reference to Mark Twain and Innocents Abroad can be read in Tip Top No. 719 on page 13. Ever read this book fellow Round-Uppers? If not, get it from your library and do so. For first class, entertaining reading, it is a "lulu."

Gilbert Patten must have been a remarkably well read man in his day and time. In my scrap book of Merriwelliana from various sources I have several pictures of him reading books. He must have read a lot of the books that were not only the "best sellers" of the period, but those of the most profound interest in his lifetime. He is shown sitting deeply absorbed with a book in his hand, mustached and in his thirties. Also standing at a book case greatly interested in a book he is holding and in his twilight years at a desk with volumes all about him, with his old, grey head and leonine face at all attention towards them. A remarkable and all-around man, indeed, all things considered.

But he was unlike the virtuous heroes he created in a lot of respects. We are told that he was more or less of a chain cigarette smoker. (Frank Merriwell would not have liked this). That he was a great poker player. Frank would not have condoned this, either, though his one inherent weakness was gambling. Patten also imbibed now and then when the occasion demanded with a party of friends, and also at times when there was no "occasion," if we are to believe his own words. Two marriages were most unhappy and unsuccessful, but at last he found great happiness in a third venture.

I would not think of putting Gilbert Patten on a par or plane with Abraham Lincoln. Both were great in their fields, but there is no comparison between the novel-writer and the statesman. But in closing it would seem fair of Patten to say of him as the poet, Tom Taylor (some say it was Shirley Brooks) said of Lincoln in a

19 stanza verse at the time of his assassination in 1865. The poem was printed in the London "Punch" on May 6, 1865. After extolling the many virtues of the martyred President and dwelling lightly on his weaknesses all through the long poem, the final line read thus:

"... With much praise, little to be forgiven."

EXPERIENCES AND THOUGHTS ON GILBERT PATTEN

By Charles Bragin

His influence on youth—before 1900 boys ambitions were—to go West and shoot Indians—or play cops and robbers—from reading Nick Carters and James Boys—or to find a lost pocket-book, return it to the owner who would make the boys fortune.

Merriwell turned the boys thoughts and ambitions to the athletic field—to playing baseball, football. Every week the Tip Tops offered prizes, gave data on boys games, etc. Boys wanted to go to Yale when they grew up, and when they married they often sent sons to that university.

Reminds me, last year a lady wanted a Tip Top with Inza in it. Reason, her father, a boyhood Merriwell reader, named his daughter Inza.

From collector viewpoint—Tip Top's the No. 1 favorite—reason, most collectors buy from sentiment, and most collectors read Tip Tops—and parents mostly approved the Merriwell stories, so many boys collected the novels.

The first year or two of the Tip Tops failed to bring big sales—even with the new "color cover" pictures to lure buyers. Small editions were published, so first issues are very rare. Early numbers are almost always reprints which were made in later years, to cover the demand for early numbers, from boys who became later readers of the Merriwell stories.

I value my complete set of 986 Tip Tops at \$7,500.00. Reason, every copy

is brand new, as fine as when published 50 or more years ago. Every copy, every early number, is an original first edition. There is not even a fly speck on any copy. Aside from the 20 years to make up the collection, I bought over 10,000 Tip Tops to make my collection perfect.

Stories are published now and then, in magazines, about the effect on boys from reading Tom Swift or Rover Boy novels. Actually for every reader of those novels, thousands read the Tip Tops—because they were nickel novels which boys could afford. Boys could not afford the dollars to buy the other novels, so depended on the few their parents bought.

What was the circulation of Tip Tops? Publisher never revealed the figure. But Harry Wolff, who took over the Tousey outfit, and later sold it to Street & Smith, joining that firm, told me that over 500,000 Tip Tops sold per week.

NOTE

Mr. Wallace H. Walrop reports that Corinth Publications of San Diego California, are now reprinting in pocket book form a number of pulp magazine stories of the 1930's. So far they have published 10 PHANTOM DETECTIVE, 3 DR. DEATH, 3 OPERATOR #5, and at least one SECRET AGENT X. Also being published are DOC SAVAGE, G-8 AND HIS BATTLE ACES and THE SHADOW.

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EXCERPTS FROM LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr. LeBlanc: Dime Novel business is slow as I have not been able to buy any in a long time. I would like to find some Liberty Boys. — Ward G. Loucks, 150 East 8th Street, Oswego, N. Y. (Can anyone offer Mr. Loucks some Liberty Boys for sale?)

Dear Mr. LeBlanc: I'm still looking for Ned Buntline items and dime novels whose locale is the Adirondacks. — Warder Cadbury, 360 State Street, Albany, N. Y.

Dear Mr. LeBlanc: I was fortunate enough to get almost a hundred Beadles early dime novels, dialogues and speakers, not No. 1. How does one get a reprint of that? — Ernest P. Sanford, Silver Spring, Md. (Good question. Does anyone have Beadles Dime Novel for sale, or the cloth bound reprint published in 1939 by John Day?)

Dear Ed: It's nice to be associated with such a grand bunch of fellows as the Dime Novel subscribers. I've written to quite a few resulting in many advantageous swaps. I especially enjoy the articles concerning the hard cover boys' books. How about some information on the later series such as Tom Swift, Baseball Joe, etc. There must be other fellows in their 40's and 50's who would like this. — Jack Herman, East Meadow, N. Y.

Dear Ed: Thank you for sending me the copies of the Roundup. They are fascinating! You have captured my interest completely. Enclosed is my check for \$3.00. Please enter my name upon the list of subscribers. — Steve Press, Mt. Vernon, N. Y. (Your name has been entered.)

Dear Mr. Leithead: I have just read your article on Ellis and Castlemon, two of my favorites. Have a lot of each including some dime novels of Ellis under several of his pseudonyms. I did enjoy the article. — Ernest P. Sanford, Silver Spring, Md.

Dear Edward: I have just received my first copy of the Dime Novel Round-Up, and as I am a collector of old boys' books, my interest natur-

ally was absorbed in your great little magazine. My interests lie mainly in the procurement of Magnets, Gems, Monster, Bullseye, Nelson Lee, Triumph, Champion, Puck, Crackers, Chips, Joker, etc. American Detective magazines, Weird Tales, Thrilling Mysteries and others of the like. Unfortunately, owing to the difference in currency, I cannot buy, but would like to swap. — Frank L. Knott, 29 Colson St., Avalon, Wellington, New Zealand (Can anyone offer Mr. Knott any of his wants. He will forward a trade list.)

Dear Mr. LeBlanc: Do you know where I might obtain old copies of the pink Police Gazette? — Dencil E. Wilson, 36 Homersham Road, Kingston on Thames, England. (Can anyone offer Mr. Wilson any Police Gazettes?)

Dear Mr. Leithead: I want to offer my word of thanks for all the splendid stuff you have given us in the Round-Up with the hope that you will continue on with it in the future as you have in the past. It is sure very interesting and informative. — Gerald J. McIntosh, Little Rock, Ark.

Dear Ed: I have a number of books by Sabatini, Joseph Lincoln and a number of Science Fiction items for sale. Do you know of anyone who might be interested? — Daniel Bundza, 31 Stoneleigh Road, Worcester, Mass. 01606.

Dear Ed: Last week I saw on TV an attempt to put FRANK MERRI-WELL on television. It was a discarded pilot for a series presented on the CBS Summer Playhouse. How badly it missed! How wrong they were in their attempt! — Steve Press, Mt. Vernon, N. Y. (I second your views.)

Dear Eddie: I recently picked up a set of Snaps plus about 60 Wide Awake Library comics from a book-dealer. But I am still looking for a good long run of Young Wild West. — Ross Crauford, Brooklyn, N. Y.

Mr. Warder Cadbury sent a page from a sale catalogue offering #87 Frank Starr's American Novels for

sale at \$20.00. Prices sure are high. I wonder if anyone buys at these prices.

RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES CONCERNING DIME NOVELS

WORLDS OF TOMORROW, August 1966 issue. **TOM SWIFT AND THE SYNDICATE**, by Sam Moskowitz. A knowledgeable article about Tom Swift and his creator, Edward Stratemeyer. Mr. Moskowitz traces Stratemeyer's literary beginnings for Golden Days, Street & Smith publications and his emergence in the cloth bound boys' book field. *World of Tomorrow* is published by Galaxy Publishing Co., 421 Hudson St., New York. If copies are not available on your newsstands why not write the company for a copy.

NEWSY NEWS

Reckless Ralph Cummings

Remember the late Charles Jonas of 3127 Hartzell St., Evanston, Ill.? Does anyone know the whereabouts of his wife, Mrs. Hattie Jonas, and her daughter? The last I heard they were living in Florida—Bradenton I believe it was. Mrs. Jonas spoke about an old writer of thrillers being Lewis J. Gardner, whose pen name was Andrew Dearborn and Lewis J. Swift. He wrote very few novels, among them were "Scarred Eagle" and "White Serpent" in the old Beadle yellowbacks—also one Munro's 10c Novels called "The Wabash Rangers." Charlie also wrote me (in 1939) that Gustave Aimard, who wrote in many of the early Beadles Dime Library, was not his true name, but Oliver Gloux. This Frenchman spent 20 years of his life in our Southwest, living with the redskins. He wrote some 25 novels in all.

Got a letter from an old friend and Roundupper, way back when he joined the H. H. Bro. he was listed as no.

93 or 94 in the Roundup, in the early 1930's. George E. Mostacello, remember him? He is down in Florida now. Will see if we can get him back into the fold once more. I haven't heard from him in a long, long, time.

Back numbers *Reckless Ralph's Dime Novel Roundup*, Nos. 1 to 237, some reprints, 12 for \$1.00 or all for \$21. Sent postpaid. You also get *Dime Novel Catalogue*, Birthday No. 2, indexes, #1 Pioneer and Scouts of the West.

Can you beat it?

Ralph F. Cummings

161 Pleasant St.

So. Grafton, Mass. 01560

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I certify that the statements made by
me above are correct and complete.

Edward T. LeBlanc

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

128. David Edelberg, 1220 S. Leavitt, Chicago, Ill. 60608 (New address)
 264. Stephen Press, 290 East Sidney Ave., Mt. Vernon, N. Y. 10553 (New)
 265. John C. Kunzog, 36 Norton Ave., Jamestown, N. Y. 14701 (Former mem)
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 267. Norman P. Zaichick, Library Services Dept., 203-D144, Argonne National Laboratory, 9700 South Cass Ave., Argonne, Ill. 60440 (New Member)
 268. Edward Renolds, 47 High St., Thorndike, Mass. 01079 (New Member)
 269. Michael Grinet, 36 Southbridge St., c/o Odd Book Store, Worcester, Mass. 01608 (New Member)
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